



## Southern Baptist missionary who admitted abuse is working at Raleigh church

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RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) -- A Southern Baptist missionary who was fired for abusing children in Indonesia is working at a Raleigh church where the minister knew of his past.

William McElrath's abuse case is the first in the Southern Baptist Convention this year, following months of Roman Catholic scandals.

McElrath, 70, teaches English to new immigrants and students, mostly from North Carolina State University, in a program of the Forest Hills Baptist Church.

Last week, he wrote the 1,800 church members that during a time of "stress and culture shock" in Indonesia he was guilty of "touching, tickling, cuddling and fondling that went too far." Relatives of McElrath's victims want him kept away from children, The News & Observer reported.

The mission board resolved an earlier complaint against McElrath, then fired him in 1995 after further charges surfaced. Forest Hills said there were no incidents of abuse after 1973. It's unclear how many children McElrath molested -- no charges were ever filed in the United States.

McElrath said he told the Rev. Larry Harper, Forest Hills' pastor, about the accusations, and they agreed McElrath would take no position of authority with children. But McElrath acknowledged he and his wife "occasionally accepted one-time requests to share with children or youth."

Harper said his agreement with McElrath has now been formalized and he won't be allowed to work with youths.

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